

Postcolonial Literature

Description

When the peoples of Africa, India, and the Caribbean finally gained independence from the British during the 20th century, they found that their national, cultural, and individual identities had been radically altered by the experience of colonization. In this colloquium, we will examine how authors have related this postcolonial condition; or, as some have put it, how "the empire writes back." We will examine a diverse body of texts--poetry which eloquently describe the heroic journey out of colonialism, drama which lays bare the conflicts of assimilation, and novels which fantastically present political struggle--as we determine how postcolonial theory and literature affects and possibly redefines all literature.

Expectations

- I expect you to come to class prepared, meaning not merely having read the material for the class, but having thought about that material.
- I expect you to be willing to work hard and share that work with the class.
- I expect you to come to class on time, with the appropriate text.
- I expect you to respect your fellow classmates and myself. I expect us to have lively discussion in class, but such discussion can only take place when everyone feels comfortable and respected.
- I expect you to communicate any issues or concerns with me at any time.

Materials

Readings

Ashcroft, B. et al., 1995. Post-colonial Studies Reader. London: Routledge.

Ashcroft, B. et al., 2006. Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts. London/New York: Routledge.

Ashcroft, B. et al., 2005. The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature. London/New York: Routledge.

Agbaw. S.E. (ed.), 2006. Aspects of Postcolonial Literature. Nitra: UKF.

McLeod, J., 2000. Beginning Postcolonialism. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Vigo, Julian. 2006 "Limoge, Our Women, and Other Colonial Metaphors". *The Languages of Gender*. Nicosia: University of Cyprus.

Other Materials

- A working email address (if you do not check your ursinus.edu account regularly, please provide me with the address you use most often)
- A notebook which will serve as a journal to record your reactions to the readings and class discussion

Requirements

Essays (50% of final grade; close reading: 15%, critical analysis: 30%)

One of the essays will be a shorter close reading of an aspect of one of the works we read. Such an essay need not include outside research, though it may benefit from supporting and/or conflicting readings. Regardless, the essay should demonstrate a coherent and detailed interpretation of the text and not merely an explication of plot or character. Your reading may come from a certain approach, focus on a specific structural element, or delve deeply into a

significant theme, character, or plot point. The other essay will be a longer, more research-oriented essay. Like the above essay, it should involve close reading, but also have a wider scope. It may consider the plot of a novel or compare two or more novels; it may trace the evolution of a character or compare two or more characters; it may bring in cultural or historical context to shed light on a work; it may use a theoretical lens to clarify the meaning of a work. To support your interpretive argument, the essay should include ample and relevant outside research. More detailed information about these essays will be provided in class. The timeline for these essays will depend on the following.

Class Facilitation (20%)

You will lead discussion for one class meeting. The class should begin with a short presentation, outlining important plot points, themes, questions, and connections with other texts. You will then lead discussion for the rest of the class meeting (I will not leave you to twist in the wind, but this really is your class). The style and method of the facilitation is entirely up to you; I urge you to meet with me prior to your facilitation session if you have any concerns. Regarding the essays above, I might suggest basing the longer research essay on the work for which you facilitate discussion; however, you may choose not to. Regardless, I expect to hear from you regarding which essay you will be turning in on the appropriate due date.

Theory Facilitation and Evaluation (15%)

We will be reading four texts together which are all important milestones in postcolonial theory; my selection does not presume to be exhaustive or even fair, but I do think each of these theoretical works are important in their own way. As a way of approaching these texts, which can sometimes be dense and even impenetrable, you will work with a group of about four people to present an essay to the class; this session in a way will be a mini-facilitation, since you do not have to do all of the heavy lifting on your own. I expect you and your group to provide a clear direction for the class and a coherent understanding of the text. Following your facilitation, you will submit a two-page evaluation of the text wherein you might provide ways in which students and scholars could use the text, criticisms you have of it, and/or a judgment of the importance of the work in postcolonial studies and literary studies in general.

Response Journal and Class Participation (20%)

It is important to engage with texts; one way to engage with them is to write about them. To encourage this activity, you will keep a response journal that you will bring to every class period. In this journal, you should record your reactions to the texts we read and even to class discussions. The journal should be with you at every class because a) periodically I will ask you to write in them in class and b) periodically I will collect them. I will not be reading them, but instead recording your progress: satisfactory progress would be at least a page per week.

The success of this class depends upon your participation; therefore, I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the texts and thoughtfully engage with your classmates. I do not expect everyone to foam at the mouth, but I do expect at least a glimmer of thought from everyone.

Policies

Not coming to class will negatively impact your grade. Things happen--a bad burrito at lunch, a bad night before, a bad telephone call from home; I went to college too. It is far better for you to alert me of problems you are having than for you to keep me in the dark. That being said, more than two absences will upset me and upset your participation grade; more than four absences will result in an F for this part of your grade and possible removal from the course after you, the dean, and I talk. Just show up, OK? I will show up unless I am deathly ill or the College officially cancels because of inclement weather; I will email the class if I will not be there.

Essays can be submitted via e-mail instead of on paper; regardless, they should be formatted according to the essay style sheet provided on the website.

Assignments are due on the date they are assigned (I know; it's a novel policy). For every day the assignment is late, the grade will be reduced one-third (e.g. an A paper due Thursday but turned in Tuesday would receive a C+); an essay turned in one week late will automatically receive an F. If any of the required assignments have not been turned in before the end of the semester, you will receive a failing grade for the course.